AKha A04
Miao AE5

/151 cont./

A M 535 [883] [887] [532] the Akha and Meau. Old people of either sex do not dance under any circumstances, whether or not they are now widowed or unmarried. I have already discussed the participation of children at the dance entertainments in the sections, "Art in the Life of the Children" and "Sexual Development," in the chapter, "Life in the Community." Masks and masked dances are unfamiliar to both peoples.

A 123 535 609 Although the Akha are strictly endogamous, it is said, as my interpreter maintained, that on rare occasions they do not object to the participation of guests in their dances. I wanted to verify this statement, however, and suggested to my wife that she make an attempt to dance with the Akha women when the opportunity arose. On one of the following evenings my wife stepped into the circle of dancers. At first no one wanted to take her hand; a few even fled into the forest. Then my wife promptly seized by the hands two of the women taking flight, pulled them back to the dancing place, and soon all had lost their shyness before her, and even those who had fled returned. Two of the older girls then took my wife into the circle and taught her the dance steps. This visibly broke the ice. They found the khaki trousers and blouse of my wife abominable, but my wife had to confess that she had no festive garb. Nothing could be simpler! They gladly wanted to help her out with their clothing. Of course these garments of the Akha, among whom my wife looked like a giantess, did not fit at all. To be sure, /152/ nothing could be done, but the girls at least decked out my wife with ornaments and chains of beads made of dried fruits, and they were not satisfied until she was adorned with a great number of these chains, and then they all laughingly began to dance. All this had taken place without any ill-humor at all, and from this day on the Akha women, who before that had been very distrustful, lost all their shyness before us, which greatly facilitated our investigations.

A 123 535 [541] [177] To be sure, among the Akha, too, there may be a dance to honor someone, or the festively adorned dancers may invite him to accompany them to the dancing place, but even with all the good understanding we had not counted on belonging to this select group. One evening, however, it was about nine o'clock and we were already in our beds in the tent, when shots

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805 821 192 According to my observations, the times of day are reckoned according to the height of the position of the sun and not according to the length of the shadows. The sun is called nū; the moon, thī; the stars, nū kŏ; the Milky Way, nū kŏ kă lūn tŏ; the evening star, tsă tsĭ gĕ. In addition, a number of fixed stars and constellations are known, and their rising and setting are observed. Needless to say, sunrise, nū tóă, noon, nū tše ró, and sunset, nū pŭn kău, are distinguished. The length of an interval of time is reckoned by the times of the day required to travel a given route or to finish a certain task.

512 The course of a day for the Meau depends on whether or not there is work to be done in the fields. In both cases, however, it is regulated in established fashion. If the work in the fields is in the foreground, the men rise with the first crowing of the cock, that is, about five o'clock in the morning and find [264] breakfast already prepared by the women. The midday meal, too, is already cooked and ready to be taken to the fields. The first meal of the day is quickly eaten, and then they go together [887] for the work in the fields. Only the very old people or one woman will remain behind in each house in order to take care of the small children and the livestock. There is industrious work [264] in the fields until about noon, and then between twelve and one o'clock a pause is taken, during /433/ which the cold midday meal is eaten. Without delay they then again devote themselves to the fieldwork, which is broken off at an appropriate time, according to the length of the return trip, in order to be able to begin the tasks connected with the house before nightfall. [252] Once at home, the grain, rice or maize, is immediately ground [231] in the large stone mills (Ill. 94), the pig fodder for the next [264] day is prepared, the domestic animals are driven into the stables, and not until long after nightfall, about seven o clock or later, [517] can the Meau eat their evening meal. After this, the women settle down close to the fire and spin, the youngsters gather together, and the older men reach for the opium pipe. Soon everybody goes to bed.